

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

TOM DAVIS, CHAIRMAN



MEDIA ADVISORY

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Government Reform Committee to Review Reauthorization of D.C. College Access Act

Program Has Leveled the Playing Field for D.C. Graduates

**What: Government Reform Committee legislative hearing:
“Maintaining a Level Playing Field for D.C. Graduates: Legislation to Reauthorize
the D.C. College Access Act”**

When: MARCH 25, 2004, 10:00 A.M.

Where: ROOM 2154, RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

Background:

The Committee will review legislation that reauthorizes P.L. 106-98, the “District of Columbia College Access Act of 1999.” The original legislation authorized the establishment of a Tuition Assistance Program, providing limited financial assistance to D.C. high school graduates pursuing higher education opportunities in public and private colleges and universities in other States. The legislation authorized funding for the Program for five years (FY00 – FY05), and \$17 million has been appropriated to the Program annually.

The purpose of the hearing is to assess the impact the Tuition Assistance Program has had on leveling the playing field for District of Columbia high school graduates considering college. Given the upcoming expiration of the Tuition Assistance Program authorization, legislation will be introduced this week that would reauthorize the Program beyond the FY2005 expiration. The hearing will also look into what modifications or improvements should be made to the Program should it be reauthorized.

The objective of the 1999 legislation was twofold. First, the legislation was intended to address the District of Columbia’s lack of a State university system by providing D.C. high school graduates with access to higher education opportunities

available to residents of other States. When the legislation passed the House in November 1999, Rep. Tom Davis, bill author and Chairman of the D.C. Subcommittee at the time, said that, "College bound seniors in each of the 50 states have a vast network of state-supported institutions to attend. This bill seeks to level the playing field for D.C. residents." The second purpose of the legislation was to deter tax-paying families in the District from moving to surrounding States in order to take advantage of in-State higher education options available to residents in other States, thus depriving the District of much needed tax revenue and stability.

The Tuition Assistance Program covers the difference between in-state and out-of-state tuition rates, up to \$10,000 per year, for District of Columbia high school graduates that attend public colleges and universities in other States. Additionally, the Program provides \$2,500 annually in tuition assistance to D.C. high school graduates who attend private colleges and universities in the counties surrounding the District. Finally, an amendment to the legislation in 2001 authorized the Program to provide \$2500 annually to D.C. high school graduates who attend private Historically Black Colleges and Universities throughout the country.

In conjunction with the federally authorized Tuition Assistance Program, the private sector established a similar program, the District of Columbia College Access Program (DCCAP), to work with the Tuition Assistance Program by providing additional financial assistance to D.C. high school graduates pursuing college degrees. Additionally, the private sector program has placed college counselors in public high schools in the District to educate and counsel high school students on the options available to them after graduation. A consortium of 17 private sector companies and foundations fund the non-profit DCCAP organization and provide the money for the scholarships for the D.C. high school graduates.

WITNESSES

Panel One

The Honorable Anthony Williams, Mayor,
District of Columbia

Panel Two

Ms. Kelly Valentine, Acting Director,
District of Columbia Tuition Assistance Program;
Ms. Argelia Rodriguez, Executive Director,
District of Columbia College Access Program
District of Columbia High School Counselor
Parent of DCTAP Student
Student Participating in DCTAP

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